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General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

126th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 4 September 2012, 4 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 4.15 p.m.

Agenda item 138 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/66/668/Add.14)

The President: I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/66/668/Add.14, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/66/668/Add.13, Yemen has made the payment necessary to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in document A/66/668/Add.14?

It was so decided.

Announcement regarding the results of the election of the Chairpersons of the Main Committees

The President: I should like to inform Members that, following the consecutive meetings of the Main Committees, this morning the following representatives have been elected Chairpersons of the six Main Committees of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and are accordingly members of the General Committee for that session: First Committee, Mr. Desra Percaya of Indonesia; Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), Mr. Nelson Messone of Gabon; Second Committee, Mr. George Talbot of Guyana; Third Committee, Mr. Henry Leonard Mac-Donald of Suriname; Fifth Committee, Mr. Miguel Berger of Germany; and Sixth Committee, Mr. Yuriy Sergeyev of Ukraine.

I should like to congratulate the Chairs of the six Main Committees for the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly on their elections.

Having elected the Chairs of the six Main Committees and the 21 Vice-Presidents for the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the General Committee of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session has been fully constituted in accordance with rule 38 of the rules of procedure.

Agenda item 114 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(e) Election of members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (A/66/873)

The President: I would like to draw the attention of members to document A/66/873, in which the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations informs the President of the General Assembly that, according to the agreement among the members of the Group of Eastern European States to rotate their membership in the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law among themselves, Poland relinquished its seat in favour of Croatia on the last

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day prior to the beginning of the forty-fifth session of the Commission, in June 2012.

As a result, a vacancy has occurred and a new member must therefore be elected to fill the unexpired term of office of Poland, which commenced in June 2012, the first day of the forty-fifth session of the Commission.

As the Assembly is aware, in accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections shall be held by secret ballot, and there shall be no nominations. However, I should like to recall paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election.

In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on that basis?

It was so decided.

The President: May I therefore take it that the Assembly wishes to declare Croatia elected as a member of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law for a term of office beginning on the first day of the forty-fifth session of the Commission, in June 2012, and expiring on the last day prior to the beginning of the forty-ninth session of the Commission, in 2016?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (e) of agenda item 114?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 34 (*continued*)

Prevention of armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General (A/66/889)

The President: I would like to remind members that, as announced at the 97th and 124th plenary meetings, the debate on agenda item 34 and its sub-item (a) will take place at a later date, to be announced.

Members will recall that, under agenda item 34, the Assembly adopted resolutions 66/253 A at its 97th plenary meeting, on 16 February, and 66/253 B at its 124th plenary meeting, on 3 August. Members will also recall that the Assembly heard an oral report by the Secretary-General, in accordance with paragraph 12 of resolution 66/253 A, at its 99th plenary meeting, on 2 March.

The Assembly now has before it a report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 66/253 B, circulated in document A/66/689.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

As we meet today in the General Assembly, millions of Syrians remain in a state of enormous uncertainty, fear and the threat of death in their own country. Every day defenceless Syrians are fleeing their homes, communities and cities to seek security and refuge in neighbouring countries. Others, who have not been able to leave Syria, have been left stranded and displaced in schools and public buildings. United Nations agencies now estimate that some 2.5 million Syrians are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

As we discuss the situation in Syria today, thousands of Syrians, the majority of whom are women and children, have been killed since the uprising started, in March of last year. Despite the best efforts of the Assembly and other bodies so far, killings and gross human rights violations continue to take place in Syria. The Government of President Bashar Al-Assad has failed to protect its own citizens. Instead, it has turned its guns on its own people, in total disregard of international norms and its international commitments.

I reiterate my strong condemnation of the deadly violence in Syria. I continue to strongly urge all parties to put the people of Syria first, to set aside all political and ideological differences and to work with the United Nations and the international community in order to find a lasting solution to the crisis.

As the fighting has escalated, conditions have been untenable and impossible for the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic to do its work fully and properly. The Security Council has now agreed to create a liaison office to support international efforts for a political solution. That is an important step and represents a crucial consensus on the need to keep a United Nations presence in Damascus.

After our last meeting here in the Hall on 3 August, the respected diplomat His Excellency Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi was been appointed as the new Joint Special

Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

Mr. Brahimi takes over from former Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan, who did his utmost to secure a ceasefire and implementation of the six-point plan. I should like to thank Mr. Brahimi for accepting this critical and challenging assignment. I have extended to him my best wishes and full support. He deserves the full support of all Member States.

The General Assembly has chosen not to stay silent in the face of the ongoing killings, massacres and crisis in Syria. It adopted relevant and important resolutions in February, June and August, strongly condemning the continued widespread and systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities. It has called repeatedly on the Syrian Government to stop killing its own people. It has shown its clear commitment to protecting ordinary Syrians from the violence and death being inflicted on them by their own Government. It has called for an all-inclusive, Syrian-led political process. Those calls still stand.

Today, we need meaningful action. Today, the General Assembly needs to do all in its power under the United Nations Charter to help the Syrian people overcome the appalling political turmoil and the terrible loss of life in their nation. The killing must stop now. The massacres must cease immediately. The gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law must end, and those who commit such atrocities must be brought to justice.

The General Assembly's response, engagement and commitment concerning Syria are clear expressions of its important role, as envisaged in the United Nations Charter. The Charter requires the Assembly to take steps, where necessary, to promote and ensure international peace and security. This has become all the more necessary because of the deadlock and lack of unity within the Security Council. The General Assembly has demonstrated its role, relevance and legitimacy in this regard. I wish to commend and thank Member States and representatives in the Assembly for their support for me as President of the Assembly in this regard.

(*spoke in English*)

I now give the floor to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I thank the Assembly for this opportunity to report on the situation in Syria and the implementation of resolution 66/253 B, adopted on 3 August. This is our first opportunity to welcome the new Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. I know he is counting on the Assembly's collective support for his difficult mission. We also welcome the appointment of Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa as his Deputy.

I have just returned from Iran, where I took part in the Sixteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. I engaged in frank dialogue with the Iranian leadership on a number of important issues, including the situation in Syria. I also had in-depth discussions with Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary General of the League of Arab States, and met with former Prime Minister Al-Halqi and Foreign Minister Al-Moualem of Syria. I thanked them for the Syrian Government's support for Mr. Brahimi's appointment, and we discussed the need for a small liaison office now that the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic is drawing down.

I thank all the countries that contributed personnel. They performed with courage and dedication in the most difficult and dangerous circumstances.

While in Tehran, I repeated my consistent demand that all sides must cease all forms of violence. In particular, the Government must halt its use of heavy weapons. I also expressed my deep concerns about the humanitarian situation, and stressed the urgent need for the Syrian Government to authorize more international humanitarian organizations to work with us inside the country.

United Nations agencies will need to expand their presence in Syria, too. The humanitarian situation is grave and deteriorating, both in Syria and in neighbouring countries affected by the crisis. Humanitarian organizations continue to scale up their response in Government- and opposition-held areas alike, and in neighbouring countries.

However, we are constrained by underfunding. The $180 million humanitarian response plan is only half-funded. Some critical sectors have received almost no funding at all, while overall needs are growing. The most pressing needs are water and sanitation, shelter, essential items such as blankets and hygiene kits, and emergency medical assistance. More than

2.5 million people in Syria , including Palestinian and Iraqi refugees, need assistance. More than 1.2 million people are displaced inside the country. The number of Syrian refugees registered in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq is now more than 225,000 and rising. These Governments have generously opened their borders and accepted their responsibility to shelter those who have sought refuge. They urgently need support. Just this weekend, Jordan increased its appeal for funding to meet the growing demands.

We also have to recognize the risk that violence could spill over into neighbouring countries. The conflict is intensifying. The longer it goes on, the more difficult it will be to contain, the more difficult it will be to find a political solution, and the more challenging it will be to rebuild the country and the economy.

This is the context in which Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi takes up his duties. I thank him for taking on this task. It is daunting but not insurmountable. To succeed, he needs the Assembly's united and effective support to help the warring parties realize that the solution will come not through arms, but through dialogue that respects the universal rights and freedoms of all Syrians.

My report (A/66/889) reflects the situation as of 17 August. It is much worse today. We have since witnessed another mass killing in the town of Daraya. This crime must be fully and independently investigated. The conflict has taken a particularly brutal turn. Syrian Government forces continue indiscriminate shelling of densely populated areas with heavy weapons, tanks and air assets. Opposition groups have stepped up military activity. Civilians bear the brunt of the violence. Even people in line for bread have been attacked. Large-scale human rights violations are been reported. Prisoners on both sides are subject to harsh treatment and often torture. There have been alarming reports of summary executions on both sides.

Government forces and the armed opposition have clearly failed to protect civilians and respect the rules of international humanitarian law.

We must ensure that anyone, on any side, who violates international humanitarian law or human rights law is held to account.

The United Nations and its partners are doing all we can inside and outside Syria. But we have to ask if we have done enough, and if we have done the right thing. The first responsibility to end the conflict lies with the parties, and in particular with the Government. But we, too, have a collective responsibility to find ways to help the Syrians to end the violence and resolve their differences through peaceful means. All elements of Syria's rich and diverse society need to be reassured that their rights and freedoms will be respected. Fears of sectarian retribution must be alleviated.

But first, we need to facilitate an end to the fighting. The continuing militarization of the conflict is deeply tragic and highly dangerous. I appeal to all outside parties, especially the countries of the region, to do all they can to end this trend. Those who provide arms to either side are only contributing to further misery and the risk of unintended consequences as the fighting intensifies and spreads. Regional leaders have a key role to play in creating the conditions conducive to a solution. I call, too, on the Security Council and the Assembly to find common ground so we can help the Syrian people to start charting a way towards an inclusive, peaceful and democratic political transition that will be decided by Syrians themselves.

A number of initiatives to resolve the conflict were put forward in Tehran. Other initiatives and meetings are on the horizon. But missing from all of them is a unity of effort that will have an impact on the ground. How many more will be killed and wounded, their lives shattered, before President Al-Assad and his advisers are persuaded to change course? How can we convince armed groups that a better future lies not in fighting, but in building the foundations of a new political and social contract that guarantees freedom and justice? How many children will attend the funerals of their parents, and how many parents will weep at the funerals of their children, before all parties agree to end the violence and destruction?

The Syrian people have waited too long. And now the entire region is being engulfed by the complex dynamics of the conflict. Solving this crisis was never going to be easy, but it has become more complex with each passing month. I once again urge the Government and the armed opposition to abandon military activities, engage in dialogue, protect civilians, and abide by their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.

The United Nations will assist all parties to build a Syrian-led alternative to the use of force. We are committed to helping them determine a path,

backed by the international community, to come to the negotiating table and move towards a democratic, plural political system with equal rights for all. Joint Special Representative Brahimi will help to facilitate such a political solution and transition, as called for by the resolutions of the Assembly, the Security Council and the League of Arab States. He has already been working diligently, consulting closely with the members of the Security Council. After this meeting he will go to Cairo for further consultations with the League of Arab States before proceeding as soon as possible to Damascus.

I appeal to Members today to provide solid and unified support for his difficult and essential mission.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

As noted in my letter dated 29 August 2012, I have invited the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, to participate in today's meeting. If there is no objection, and without setting a precedent, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to invite the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, to make a statement at this meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

Mr. Brahimi: It is a great honour indeed to come to this Assembly as I prepare to start my difficult mission. I thank you, Mr. President, for your kind words, and I am deeply thankful to the Secretary-General for his confidence and support.

As the Secretary-General has just said, in a few days time I shall go to Cairo to see Mr. Nabil al-Arabi, Secretary General of the League of Arab States, to express appreciation for his confidence and to benefit from his advice and guidance, as I have benefited from the Secretary-General's.

The Secretary-General has just described the grave situation that prevails in Syria today. It has been deteriorating steadily. The death toll is staggering, the destruction is reaching catastrophic proportions and the suffering is immense. I am looking forward to my visit to Damascus in a few days time, and also, when convenient and possible, to all the countries that are in a position to help the Syrian-led political process become a reality, leading to a transition that respects the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and enables them independently and democratically to determine their own future.

The future of Syria will be built by its people and none other. The support of the international community is indispensable and very urgent, but it will be effective only if all pull in the same direction. As I told the Secretary-General a few days ago, I, my Deputy Mr. Al-Kidwa, and the members of my team will spare no effort to participate in the common endeavour to find peace for the people of Syria.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country, Syria, has accepted the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States. My country has stated its full readiness to cooperate with him in order to ensure the success of his work, which he has just very clearly described.

In that connection, I would like to underscore that the resignation of Mr. Kofi Annan should not be a reason to ignore the six-point plan adopted under Security Council resolution 2042 (2012). We call on all Arab, regional and international parties that have influence over the armed groups — in particular those States that refused to meet Mr. Kofi Annan and to cooperate with him or whose representatives made destructive and negative statements days after he took over — to cooperate with Mr. Brahimi in implementing their commitments under resolution 2042 (2012), as well as the rules of international law and the Charter.

The Syrian Government has responded to its people's demands and meticulously and open-mindedly addressed all efforts to resolve the crisis peacefully, including Mr. Annan's six-point plan. Regrettably, disregarding the rest of the plan, some parties decided that only one of its points, or rather half a point, should be implemented.

Syria supported Kofi Annan's plan and cooperated with the observer mission and with General Mood. It provided all necessary facilities in the context of the understanding with the United Nations and Mr. Annan and of Syrian national independence in such a way as to achieve the Syrian-led political process underscored by Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and

2043 (2012) and just described by the Secretary-General and Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. In a statement made by its Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Syria officially welcomed the final communiqué issued by the Action Group for Syria in Geneva on 30 June.

The operations conducted by the law enforcement authorities and the Syrian army since the beginning of the crisis arise from the obligation, shared by every State Member of the United Nations, to protect its civilians and public and private property, to combat terrorism and to prevent violence. The authenticity of our Government's statements to Member States regarding the presence of armed groups undertaking terrorist acts, regrettably fuelled by Arab, regional and international parties that are now well known to all, has become crystal clear to everyone, including the Secretary-General and senior officials of the Secretariat, who initially were cautious, as representatives will recall, about the activities by terrorist armed groups within Syria.

However, it is regrettable that such groups have more than once been referred to as being on an equal footing with the Syrian Government, which, as a legitimate Government of a sovereign State and a founding Member of the Organization, is obliged to protect Syrian society and its security and stability under the Charter and international law. Despite increasingly destructive activities that would challenge any Government, and the fact that those acts have been accompanied by the imposition of unprecedented comprehensive sanctions against Syria by some States, the Syrian Government is well aware of its responsibilities and duties towards its people.

It has directed all its energy towards restoring infrastructure and services and to providing medical, food and financial assistance. It has also strived to coordinate national governmental and non-governmental efforts to meet the needs of those affected by the current events, and to make all necessary facilities available to international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the needy by facilitating the access of international bodies and non-governmental organizations to affected areas. Those entities include the World Food Programme, which is undertaking highly commendable work, the International Committee of the Red Cross and its head, who was in Damascus to meet our President, and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, which is doing critical work in the field. It is also fully cooperating with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which has led to a response plan being drawn up together with the United Nations entities working in Syria.

In that regard, I wish to mention the statement made by the Secretary-General regarding the fact that a lack of funds remains one of the main obstacles to the response plan. The sum total of contributions to the OCHA response plan has not reached more than 39 per cent of the required amount. No Arab or Islamic State has contributed.

Currently, the contributions to the regional response plan of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have not exceeded 54 per cent.

We reaffirm, in that regard, Syria's full preparedness for and welcome of any sincere international effort to provide assistance to Syrian citizens for exclusively humanitarian purposes, taking into consideration that our people were not in need of anyone's assistance before the gross external interference in our internal affairs. That brazen interference is designed to destroy our infrastructure and undermine the socio-economic success we have achieved over the course of decades. Of the 38 main hospitals in Syria, 13 are out of service. Seventy per cent of the medicine-producing factories have been burned in Halabja. The main telecommunications cable between Damascus, Homs, Hama and Halabja has been targeted 20 times, while hundreds of schools have been destroyed, museums plundered, populations evicted and their homes and places of worship plundered. Unfortunately, certain mentally defective individuals have invented a new kind of jihad which they call the "jihad of lusts", based on their forays into Syrian refugee camps to marry young girls between the ages of 14 and 16 years old, which they consider to be a form of jihad or struggle.

In that connection, I call on all my Syrian brothers to participate in reconstructing what has been damaged by the crisis and to help restore security and stability in our country and to establish the rule of law, which imposes rights and duties on all of us to protect citizens from the scourges of corruption, nepotism and partiality, and to protect the State from outlaws. All of that naturally depends on tolerance, reconciliation, confidence, joint national action, and resistance to external agendas.

As Syrians, all of us are duty-bound to realize that the solution is to be found only through a comprehensive, political, Syrian-led process that satisfies the legitimate

aspirations of all Syria's citizens. Such a process would entail a comprehensive national dialogue, bringing together all Syrians who believe in our country with a view to establishing a pluralistic democratic State where everybody will be equal. Syria has enjoyed the wellspring of its civilization, characterized over thousands of years by coexistence, diversity, tolerance and a pioneering role. Despite the painful hiatus in our history that we face today, that wellspring will endure through the will of our citizens and not at the mercy of the radical Wahhabist-Salafist petrodollar, which is blindly loyal to Western hegemony over Syria's political fate and options.

In conclusion, on behalf of my Government I welcome the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States. I affirm that Syria is open-minded and fully committed to the mission of Mr. Brahimi to end the violence and find a Syrian-led political solution to the crisis in my country, as set forth in the six-point plan and Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). That is the crux of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). On this occasion, I call on all Member States, particularly those with direct influence over the parties that have rejected political dialogue and the cessation of violence. I shall not name those Member States today, but it is clear to whom I am referring. I call on them in particular to follow in the footsteps of the Syrian Government and lend an earnest helping hand to Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. We wish him every success.

Mrs. Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 66/253 B on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. We welcome the new Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and thank him for his presence with us today and for his statement.

As we continue to closely follow the situation in Syria, we have been appalled once again in the past few days by the news of yet another mass killing of civilians, this time in Daraya, near Damascus, where more than 200 people may have been murdered. Brazil condemns and repudiates that heinous act of violence and the continuation of gross violations of human rights in Syria.

According to the report of the Secretary-General (A/66/889), the Government and the opposition continue to vie for a military solution in Syria in the mistaken logic that weapons would assure them final victory. Brazil deeply regrets that the parties insist on taking the path of armed conflict and call on them yet again to stop the violence immediately and engage in effective negotiations. We reiterate that the Government of Syria has the primary responsibility to put an end to violence and to create the conditions for a successful political process. In turn, the armed opposition must fully reciprocate. The international community in general, and key actors in particular, also have the historic and grave responsibility to avoid contributing in any way to further militarization of the conflict.

In the year in which we celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and redouble efforts for its universalization, it was especially disturbing to learn some weeks ago of public statements regarding the possible resort by Syria to chemical weapons. We took note subsequently of the public commitment made by Damascus to respecting its obligations under the 1925 Geneva Protocol.

Since we deplore the possession of weapons of mass destruction by any country, we reiterate our call on the Syrian Government to refrain from their use under any circumstances. The already visible effect of the conflict on Syria's neighbours, especially Lebanon, is a source of growing concern. The international community must continue to support the Lebanese Government in its efforts to ensure the country's political stability. Urgent consideration must be given to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria and neighbouring countries.

The international community must unite to help the Syrian people, as well as the countries that are sharing the burden of the increasing influx of refugees, notably Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Brazil has announced a contribution to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for assistance to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. We appreciate the efforts being made by the United Nations and several Governments to mitigate the suffering of the Syrian people. Such efforts should be strictly confined to the humanitarian area and avoid any association with political, diplomatic or military actions or initiatives.

We wish Mr. Brahimi every success and firmly support him in his challenging mission. Brazil considers that the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the matter, as well as the final communiqué of the Action Group, offer a good basis for his endeavour to persuade all parties that there is still time for a peaceful solution to the crisis.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): It has been said that the further back you look, the further forward you can see. This truth hangs over the General Assembly today. Long before Al-Assad's planes demolished major cities, long before his thugs murdered entire families in their homes, long before the death count rose well above 20,000, the dangers of inaction were unmistakable. The duty of the international community was clear long ago. It still is.

The daily slaughter in Syria represents the dying breath of a tyranny that goes back four decades. As Bashar Al-Assad was getting ready to graduate from high school, his father massacred tens of thousands in Hama. Years later, the keys to the regime's presidential palace and killing machine were passed down from father to son. We know what this regime represents. It does not stand for human rights or human dignity. It does not stand for democracy. It does not stand for pluralism or freedom. Before our eyes, we see the brutality and cruelty that Al-Assad is willing to unleash on his own people.

The words of the Syrian representative earlier reminded me of the story of the man who murders his parents and then cries out, "I am an orphan". He had the audacity to stand in this Hall and ask the international community for funds to care for the people that his Government is brutalizing on a daily basis. It is time for all our voices in the Assembly to be clear. Bashar Al-Assad has no moral authority to govern. He never did. The sand in his hourglass is running out.

Iran's dream for the region is the Syrian people's nightmare. Iran is the problem in Syria, not the solution. Every day it provides Al-Assad with the tools of mass murder. Iranian revolutionary guards are on the ground today assisting Al-Assad's henchmen. They have been deployed on Syrian soil to help sustain the Syrian regime and take part in the slaughter of the Syrian people. The outside forces that have been instrumental in Al-Assad's killing spree speak with a Persian accent. Asking the Iranian regime to take part in developing solutions for Syria is like inviting the Mafia to head the murder investigation squad of the New York Police Department.

Along with Iran, the Hizbullah terrorist organization forms the third arm of Al-Assad's trio of terror. Hizbullah has hijacked the Lebanese Government and transformed the south of the country into an Iranian outpost for terror. Make no mistake — when the Lebanese delegation speaks in this Hall about Syria, the black shadow of Hizbullah hangs over its shoulder. The Hizbullah chief Hassan Nasrallah sits on Al-Assad's advisory board, offering the tyrant of Damascus guidance on how to butcher his own people more effectively. As Nasrallah recently told a cheering crowd, Syria is a real military partner for Hizbullah. This is the same organization that is the self-proclaimed protector of Lebanon. The world cannot ignore the frightening reality that Al-Assad's stockpiles of chemical weapons could soon be placed in Hizbullah's hands. All must wake up to this danger today, not tomorrow. Action is necessary. The red lines are very clear.

The people of Syria are not the indiscriminate victims of a natural disaster. They are not the tragic fatalities of a famine. They are not the accidental casualties of war. They are the deliberate targets of a brutal regime that will commit any crime and cross any line to cling to power. It does not make a difference or matter where one comes from, what politics one preaches or what faith one belongs to; no decent human being can stand silent in the face of what is happening in Syria.

Israel will continue to raise its voice for the people of Syria. We extend our hand to them, offering humanitarian aid, food and medicine. History's lessons echo in this Hall today. Our moral imperative is clear. Yet the slaughter continues, the casualties mount and the violence goes on. The voices of the victims call to us. We must all be there for them.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting to discuss the Secretary-General's report (A/66/889) submitted in compliance with resolution 66/253 B, adopted on 3 August. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and the Joint Special Representative, His Excellency Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, for their statements.

I take the floor in response to the Secretary-General's invitation to Member States to utilize today's meeting to

express unqualified support for Mr. Brahimi's mission. Since the General Assembly's last meeting on this agenda item (see A/66/PV.124), the situation in Syria, as both the Secretary-General and the Joint Special Representative pointed out, has deteriorated further. The conflict has become increasingly militarized and has been exploited by well-known terrorist groups. A number of terrorist acts have been committed against State institutions and public infrastructure. There have been gross violations of human rights by all sides.

Unfortunately, the Syrian parties, instead of embarking seriously on a Syrian-led political process, have pursued a military approach to realizing their objectives. The efforts of the international community have so far failed to address this crisis, which is increasingly affecting the region as a whole. The deteriorating situation, security-wise, has exacerbated the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian population. More than 2.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, with an ever-increasing number of internally displaced persons and refugees.

We strongly condemn all violence and violations of human rights, irrespective of who their perpetrators are. We also condemn in the strongest possible terms the terrorist acts that have been and continue to be committed in Syria. We call upon all parties, Syrian and foreign, to dissociate themselves from terrorist groups and to ensure that no space or justification is provided for such acts.

In the prevailing circumstances in Syria, there is an urgent need for the international community to close ranks and send a united message to the Syrian parties, urging them to recommit themselves to resolving the crisis peacefully through a Syrian-led, inclusive political process that can meet the legitimate aspirations of all Syrian citizens. There is no other way to bring about a sustained cessation of violence in all its forms by all parties.

In order to assist the Syrian parties to change their course and address the crisis through political dialogue, it is important that all parties inside and outside Syria fully abide by their obligations under the relevant United Nations resolutions. India firmly believes that it is critical for the United Nations to remain strongly engaged with the Syrian parties and other actors in the search for a way forward. Accordingly, we have consistently called for and supported international efforts to help the Syrian parties to resolve the crisis and bring about peace through dialogue and political processes. We also strongly support the Secretary-General's efforts in this direction.

In conclusion, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to welcome Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria and reiterate our strong support for his mission. We are particularly encouraged by his assertion that he and his deputy will spare no effort to work towards finding a solution. We also urge all sides, Syrian and foreign, to cooperate with Mr. Brahimi in good faith so that the Syrian crisis can be resolved without further bloodshed.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria): Algeria welcomes the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, and deeply appreciates his willingness to bring his considerable experience to bear on the crucial task of ending the violence and suffering in Syria. We extend our full support to him while expressing our appreciation and thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has sought to unite the international community around key principles.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Syria (A/66/889). Algeria fully shares the views outlined in the conclusions of the report, in particular with respect to the pre-eminence of the political solution and the extremely important role of diplomacy in promoting a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

My delegation also shares the concerns of the Secretary-General about the continuing militarization of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and its grave humanitarian consequences. We join the appeal of the Secretary-General to all parties to abandon the military solution, cease military activities, engage in dialogue, protect civilians, and abide by their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.

It is time for the international community to close ranks and to send a united message to the Syrian parties to walk back their military approach and to embrace the only path to bringing about an end to the violence and a sustainable peaceful solution through an inclusive, Syrian-led political process.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, with respect to the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United

Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, I should say that we are pleased to see him take up his new position. Taking into account his good reputation and broad experience in addressing issues of a sensitive nature, we are confident that he will also rigorously pursue the goal of finding a comprehensive and peaceful political settlement to the Syrian crisis. The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to work with him closely, as we did with Mr. Kofi Annan, in following up on sound policies to contribute to the resolution of the ongoing crisis. We are supportive of any constructive, unbiased, impartial and peaceful Syrian-led political process, and we stand ready to play a constructive role in that process. It is only through such a process that a broader political reconciliation and the national unity, integrity and stability of Syria will be maintained.

The continuation of violence and the levelling of recriminatory allegations against one another not only do not provide a solution to any problem, but inflame the situation even further. Unless there are meaningful measures to curtail such destructive moves, any peaceful solution will have little chance of success.

There is also an urgent need for all international and regional players that have any influence in one way or another on this very critical issue, which has regional and international ramifications, to express their genuine interest and take serious action to find a Syrian-led political process to resolve the crisis peacefully. Unfortunately, a destructive role is being played by some countries in supporting the violent armed groups in Syria, in total disregard of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and of the principle enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law that prohibits interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States. Some of these countries are maliciously seeking regime change in Syria through coercive measures. This is clearly illegal, and is condemnable under the very basis of international law.

We believe that only the Syrian people should decide their political fate. We are deeply concerned about the disastrous consequences of different forms of foreign intervention in Syria. What has exacerbated the crisis in Syria are just such interventions, in the form of arms and sophisticated equipment being sent across the border to the rebels and terrorist groups. The international community, in particular regional and international players, should be strongly supportive of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi's mission to encourage the political parties to engage in political dialogue with the Syrian Government in order to prepare the ground for a peaceful political process. The Islamic Republic of Iran is seriously supporting such a process and has reiterated its readiness to host talks between the Syrian Government and opposition parties.

In conclusion, the representative of the Zionist regime has once again made nonsensical and baseless allegations about my country. The international community is fed up with that regime and its inhuman, aggressive, criminal policy and terrorist activities in the region and elsewhere. That is the main source of insecurity and instability in the Middle East. This is the regime whose officials, in the face of all the relevant international law, frequently threaten to attack my country militarily. This is the twenty-first century, not the nineteenth. It is ridiculous that the representative of a regime whose hands are soaked with blood talks about democracy and human rights.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his report (A/66/889). Let me reiterate our congratulations to Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi on his appointment as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, and welcome him here today. He has a noble, if onerous, task in which failure is not an option, for that would be a failure of the very ideals that the United Nations espouses.

The worsening humanitarian crisis in Syria has imperilled millions. We note with anguish that issues of access and funding continue to impede efforts to prevent the crisis from morphing into a catastrophe. All parties must ensure the availability of relief, especially to those who are most in need.

Efforts to provide humanitarian relief will remain hamstrung in the absence of a Syrian-led political solution, which is critical to addressing the deteriorating security and humanitarian situations. Without a restoration of normalcy, Syrians cannot even begin to rebuild their shattered lives.

Like all Members of the United Nations fraternity, we are deeply concerned that violence in Syria is spiralling out of control. Both sides appear to favour belligerence over engagement. That is deeply distressing. We earnestly hope that better judgement will prevail. Both parties must realize that violence only begets violence, and should invest their energies

in a political process. It is only through inclusive dialogue that Syrians can chart a course towards a stable, secure and prosperous future. The Government of Syria must also meet its commitments by creating conditions conducive to the start of such a process. The irresponsible, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, by whomever, must cease forthwith.

From the beginning, Pakistan has advocated a peaceful, Syrian-led resolution of the conflict. We believe that the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy and the final communiqué of the Action Group provide workable bases for such a solution. The international community should approach the issue with an open mind and be willing to move away from established positions. The highest priority should be a cessation of violence. This is not the time for posturing and polemics. We will support the efforts of the Joint Special Representative as we supported those of his predecessor. All parties, inside and outside Syria, should rally around Mr. Brahimi.

Pakistan believes that reviving efforts aimed at achieving a political settlement is the need of the hour. As the Joint Special Representative said during his opening remarks, the first priority should be the interests of the Syrian people. Let us hope that the Joint Special Representative will succeed in bringing all parties together to find a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis and end the vicious cycle of death and destruction immediately. In so doing, he will find in Pakistan a steadfast partner.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Let me first thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to speak and present Canada's view of the Syrian crisis.

(*spoke in English*)

As we demonstrated, following the appointment earlier this year of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan, today Canada wishes to underline its unequivocal support for Mr. Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, in his efforts to end the violence in Syria and find a way forward so that a Syrian-led political process can take root and bring about a solution to the conflict.

Canada deplores the continued violence in Syria. Canadians are deeply concerned about the mounting death toll, the growing number of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the impact of the crisis on neighbouring countries. We are concerned that the escalating violence will inflame sectarian tensions, and that the continued instability is providing fertile ground for the expansion of terrorist networks. Canada is also very concerned that in this highly volatile environment, one in which we know that chemical weapons stockpiles are in existence, such weapons will not be involved in furthering the wanton violence we are currently witnessing.

Canada calls on the Security Council to impose tough, binding economic sanctions on Syria, in an effort to pressure the Al-Assad regime into ending its violent campaign of terror against its own people and allow an inclusive, Syrian-led political transition to occur. Canada calls on Russia and China, which have sheltered the Al-Assad regime from international sanctions, to abandon that path and work with the rest of the international community to use their influence with Syria to bring about a peaceful resolution to this crisis. Canada supports the efforts of the Syrian people to achieve a free, democratic and pluralistic Syria that respects human rights and the rule of law.

The Assembly can assured that Canada will remain a leader in providing humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, having already made a commitment of some $18 million for assisting those civilians, especially women and children, who are victims of the deplorable violence being inflicted on them on a daily basis.

The President: We have heard the last speaker on this item. Several representatives have asked to exercise their right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for this first intervention and 5 minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The statement made with reference to the great British statesman Winston Churchill — that the further back you look, the further forward you can see — is correct to some extent. However, the representative of Israel fell into his own trap when he chose to quote Churchill. In mentioning him today, he also should have referred to the Balfour Declaration, made by another British politician regarding the establishment of Israel in Palestine and thus deciding the fate and future of the people of Palestine.

He relinquished what was not his to those who in truth had nothing, namely, a people scattered throughout the world owing to crimes for which Arabs were in no way directly or indirectly responsible. In doing so, he

bowed the interests and agendas that served the Zionist mentality. Reflecting on the past therefore helps us to understand the Israeli culture of terror, which has consumed thousands of hours of work and decades of time. That thorny issue has occupied generations of diplomats in this Hall.

The instability in our region, the wars and the spreading of a culture of terrorism are factors that can be grouped under one heading of Israeli terror, which has affected vast sectors of the population within and outside the region as a result of Zionist extremism and its rejection of and failure to accept others. That does not stem from the culture of our region. It is completely alien to it.

The representative of Israel, who gave the misleading and deceptive impression that he loves the Syrian people and that he is saddened by their suffering, indeed forgets that his country has continued to occupy the Syrian Golan since 1967, putting our people under the yoke of occupation, imprisonment, persecution, death and displacement. To date, half a million people have been displaced from the Syrian Golan. They patiently wait to return to their homes in implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), as well as hundreds of other resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. Instead of complying with those resolutions, which call on Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan, successive Israeli Governments have ignored and flouted international law. Israel has refused to participate in the peace process that has been supported by all Member States.

Such insolence by Israel within this international Organization could not have been perpetuated so flagrantly without the support and backing of the protectors and sponsors of its terrorism and illegal practices.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by taking this opportunity to welcome the appointment of Mr. Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States to Syria. We wish him every success so that he can help put an end to the cycle of violence in our brotherly country of Syria. I also take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to the independence, territorial integrity and unity of Syria.

It is an irony of history that the representative of the State with the richest heritage of non-compliance with the hundreds of resolutions adopted by this body and of the many examples of violations documented by reports from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Israeli human rights organizations such as B'Tselem, which are crammed with examples of the atrocities inflicted on the people in Palestine, the Syrian Golan and Lebanon, has taken it upon himself to give lessons on human rights.

My country's delegation has always spoken in favour of the principles upheld by all our Governments, including international law and the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the rights of peoples to self-determination, freedom, democracy and dignity.

Mr. Nitzan (Israel): The Syrian representative's cynical attacks on my country today are just another desperate attempt to divert attention from the real issues before us. The human rights violations occurring in Syria pose a serious threat to stability in that country and throughout the region.

Israel once again shares the international community's serious concern about the dire situation in Syria. As always, we are ready to work with our neighbours to promote peace, stability and freedom in the Middle East.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 34.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.